



THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
MASSACHUSETTS SENATE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS
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SENATOR THERESE MURRAY

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Dear Colleagues:

The Commonwealth continues on a slow but steady path to economic recovery. Mindful that we have not fully recovered from several years of economic stagnation, the Senate Committee on Ways and Means has made a commitment in our fiscal year 2007 budget recommendations to focus on community, residents, and the future of the Commonwealth.

For the 2007 fiscal year, the Committee presents a budget proposal to the membership that is fiscally responsible and balanced. Following this introduction, you will find examples of our efforts to address local aid, education, health care and human services.

As each member is keenly aware, our communities have struggled to provide basic services. In our recommendations, we make tremendous strides in putting aid directly into the hands of the Commonwealth's 351 cities and towns.

We do this by uncapping of state lottery revenue two years earlier than scheduled, increasing funding for Payment in Lieu of Taxes or PILOT, and providing a significant overhaul of the current Chapter 70 education funding formula.

In addition to increased funding for grades K-12, there is a need for a greater commitment to our public institutions of higher learning and for early education and care for young children, both of which are addressed in the following recommendations.

The Committee also recognizes that investments in health care and human services are critical to the future of the Commonwealth and its residents. The recommendations in this budget fulfill the commitments made in the landmark health care reform bill passed earlier this year. In human services, we provide additional funding to address areas where state government's performance has been lacking in past years.

The Commonwealth is still walking a fine economic line. While our tax revenues appear to be increasing sharply, we still have more than 160,000 fewer jobs and are continuing to face skyrocketing energy costs. Taking all of these factors into account, this budget strikes the appropriate balance.

The budget process continues to be a delicate balancing act. To produce an in-depth and balanced budget takes a tremendous effort by both the membership and the staff. I would like to thank my colleagues in the Massachusetts Senate, my fellow Committee members and their staffs, and the staff of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means for their commitment and dedication to producing these budget recommendations.

For the Committee,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Therese Murray". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "T" and "M".

SENATOR THERESE MURRAY

Chairwoman

Senate Committee on Ways and Means